

He made himself nothing

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[0 : 00] Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit.! Rather, in humility, value others above yourselves.! Not looking to your own interests, but each of you to the interests of the others.

! In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus, who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something he used his own advantage.

Rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance of a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death, even death on a cross.

Therefore, God exalted him to the highest place, and gave him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus, every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is the Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Father. In Jesus' name. Good morning, everyone. This morning, this Christmas morning, I don't want to speak about you and me.

[1 : 12] And with no apology to Keir Starmer, I am not going to speak about family and friendship, as if that is the most important thing about Christmas, because it isn't. We've just had Philippians chapter 2 read, And in this reading, as many of us know, the Apostle Paul pulls back from the manger and the nativity scene, and in one sweep, he paints for us the long and wonderful story of Christ Jesus, where he came from, what he did, what happened to him.

And I would love us to see, hear from Philippians this morning, the glory of Christmas, which we've alluded to already, which is that Christ Jesus is the God who made himself nothing.

Philippians 2, verse 6, winds back the clock, because life for the Lord Jesus Christ doesn't begin in the manger in the first century, but in heavenly glory in eternity.

Christ Jesus, verse 6, who being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage.

So in eternity past, in heaven, see Christ Jesus in very nature God, equal with his Father, clothed in majesty and splendour, and enjoying the very, very highest status.

[2 : 36] So picture Christ, if you like. Picture Christ at the very centre of heaven, in shining glory, high and exalted.

He is God's dearly loved Son, in heaven for all eternity, never frustrated, never hurt, always satisfied, always blessed.

He was adored by his Father and worshipped by angels for all eternity, unclouded bliss for this divine Son of God at the centre of heaven.

My guess is, if you or I were to enjoy even a moment like that with people's eyes on you, we would never, ever want to let it go. For many of us, even the smallest come down, we find that so hard, do we not?

You're put down a set at school, your team is relegated, your standard of living decreases, you're demoted at work. We hate to be made lower.

[3 : 42] But not Jesus. Says here, Christ Jesus did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage.

He knew his rightful status, God the Son, but he refused to cling on to the status that was his. Didn't grasp on to his position.

Wasn't selfish or ambitious, but rather, verse 7, he made himself nothing. Means that Jesus Christ poured himself out and emptied himself and came down.

Without losing any of his godness, he remains the eternal God. God the Son chose to surrender his heavenly rights and status and comfort and he gave it all up and made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness.

This God, you can't see at the back for it's so low, this God stooped down low and became an embryo inside a Jewish girl's womb. Took to himself a human nature, was made in human likeness. [5 : 04] The living and eternal God became a flesh and blood man. You're to imagine it, I think. He's made in human likeness, him slowly forming inside Mary.

Backbone and skull and heart and kidney and bladder, millimetre by millimetre in the darkness, his body fed and nurtured, eyes and ears, fingernails and toenails, until all curled up, he's ready. The one who is in very nature God, the creator of the universe, now arriving, all slippery and bloody and fragile, a warm little body and cords, soft bones and tender skin, five pounds of wriggling, shivering weakness, placed in a feeding trough for animals.

Look in the manger the first Christmas and what do you see? You see a tiny boy who will get cold and tired and sick and dirty and hurt, a human like us, in a sense a nobody, a servant.

That is what the heart of Christmas is about, this divine son of glory, surrounded by glory, who obediently chose to pour himself out and come down to us and for us and make himself one of us, the God who made himself nothing.

[6 : 29] Many of us will have heard that a thousand times, but that is breathtaking really, isn't it? No other religion in the world will claim, no one would even imagine anything like this, that the infinite majestic God through whom we are made would stoop to become one of us, in human likeness, a servant.

But that's not all, because in fact Christ Jesus does more. He doesn't just step down from heaven to earth, he makes himself lower still, our God.

Philippians 2 verse 8 takes us on now from his birth into his life, and being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself. Just in a few words here, the life of Jesus Christ, who having made himself nothing, now on purpose as a man, humbles himself.

You see it during his life, this God-man, his constant looking to the interests of others and valuing others above himself. Like a servant slave, the God of the universe washes the feet of his self-centred, selfish disciples.

Such grace, such love. I can try to be kind to others for an hour or two at most, maybe an hour and a half, but no more than that. Not him.

[7 : 59] Every moment of his life he humbles himself for others, until the ultimate moment of humility for him, where, as it says here, he became obedient to death, even death on a cross.

So if you can see here, from heavenly glory to the manger to now as an adult where he set his face towards Jerusalem and arriving in that city he allowed himself to be arrested and mocked and accused and spat on and spread out naked and hung to die on a cross.

The most humiliating, most low-down, degrading and vile death any man could die. Do you know this?

You see this in the verses here. None of this just happened to him. It wasn't like he took risks and things turned out badly. No, every step of his from heaven to the manger to the cross, his conscious decision.

decision. He made himself nothing. He humbled himself. As in costly obedience to his father, he determined to allow himself to come down and to be crucified in utterly humiliating shame.

[9 : 25] Dying. Dying for people like you and me. To pay with his human life for our proud, God denying sins.

To die the death that we should die in our place that God the Father might freely forgive sinners like us. Quote, as he hangs on the cross bleeding, battered, powerless and forsaken, the last thing he looks like is God.

Indeed, he scarcely looks human and yet he is. Not just human, he is the true God of all eternity who humiliates himself.

Let me ask this Christmas morning, what do you make of that? Of him? There are loads of people today who say they don't believe in some God up there, not interested, got no time for this imaginary thing and sometimes you want to ask which God do you not believe in?

Because Christians don't believe in an imaginary God or a nasty tyrant God or a sappy grandfather God or anything like that. We believe in this God born to us and dying for us.

[10 : 40] Do you see this? In heavenly glory worship for all eternity no higher status possible to enjoy than his and he gave it up so willingly and stooped so low made himself weak, poor, a human servant as a man humbled himself, humiliated himself obediently that he might die despised and

